

## [Corinna Williams]

1

S206 Dup

An Interview with Mrs. Corinna (?) Williams,

2026 O St.

(Rev. Burckhardt had told me her address was about 8th and G, and I spent over an hour looking for her, in that neighborhood)

Mrs. Williams proved to be a pert, slender, grey-haired lady, quite intelligent. The upstairs rooms were rather cluttered and upset, for there were several pickanninies around. Her daughter, dressed in shorts, came to the door.

She said her father, William Walker, was one of the first to come to Cherry Co., living first at Overton. Rev. Burckhardt said it was 1909 when they moved to Cherry Co. All of these people took up claims. She mentioned each having 640 acres (but I always thought a section was 360). She said there were enough negroes there to fill a township 36 mis. square, with few whites. There were around 175-180 negroes there. It was a very peaceful settlement. They had their own post office with grocery store, mail carrier, school, church and cemetery. Her father is buried there. All of the colored people have left there, her sister, Mrs. Roy Hays, being the last to leave to go to Valentine. They all left to educate their children. She spoke of her brother-in-law a Mr. Stith, (who Mr. Burckhardt said worked at the Jornal here) having three sons educated, one to be a chemist, another a minister, and another, a doctor. Three of her daughters became teachers, the one meeting me at the door being one.

She admitted that they could have met the depression much better up there. The men mostly worked for themselves; they took big contracts of haying and the ranches bought from them. They raised many potatoes 2 and beans, turnips, musk-melons. One lady grew a 50-lb. pumpkin. Potatoes averaged 500 or 600 bu. to the acre. One potatoe potato might weigh a pound. One hill would feed 10 people. They throw away and wasted vegetables that were better than those they could buy here in the stores. They raised chickens, turkeys, and pigs. They had all they wanted of wild gam,e game [,?] duck and pheasants. The game warden would help them hunt and fish with [seines?], catching large fish , among them catfish.

She said everybody was good to them. If they wanted work, they had no difficulty in getting it and with good pay. She often helped at the ranch kitchen. Her father's claim adjoined one of the largest ranches ( I do not remember the name, but I think one of the names was Stedman.). She would get a dollar a day and could have her child with her. She must have done washing for the ranch boys or cowboys on a large scale. Someone would bring the washing for the whole outfit. They told her to charge enough and they never questioned her charge, but always "shelled" the money out. Some times, boys brought up cattle for a meal, and if she hadn't anything ready, they'd lay down in the shade and wait, and they always paid her well, leaving a dollar or so. The people must have been very generous and somewhat prosperous. She said when they butchered at the ranch, they always gave her father so much of the meat. The ranches went together to put up ice. They could get all the ice they wanted, if they had time. The mail [wagon?] carried their milk, and cream to the r.r. charging 25 cents for the 25 mis. (I tho't before she had told me the r.r. was 35 mis. away), and the express to Omaha was .25. She mentioned getting \$11.25 either from cream, milk, or eggs at Omaha, one time, I don't know which.

3

Sometimes someone would ask for watermelons which they grew. They told them to help themselves and after the people had taken a couple, they would leave a dollar. They had

## Library of Congress

no trouble with thievery, etc. I think the colored people were of a high type, as suggested by Rev. Burckhardt.

She showed me a picture of their sod church, square with [frame?] roof, with the people standing in front. The homes and school were also sod. Their schools were good. She mentioned a Joy Conrad finishing the 12th grade there and entering the Univ. with no difficulty. (I had thought she had said there was only the 8th grade, but that was probably in the country) later going to Chicago to take up art.

As for entertainment, they had their parties, at which the old-fashioned dances were danced (no beer, as today, she informed me). Sunday School, church and class meeting meant much to them. After church they'd go visiting or have company. Twenty-five people for Sunday dinner meant nothing to her-with chicken, bread, milk, [cakes?], [pie?], all they wanted. She mentioned the wonderful pure water there, never staining a container. She mentioned the beautiful scenery. They could go about 25 mis. for all the wood they wanted.

She said 3-4 families now lived in Valentine. There were "Piles" of Negroes living in Alliance for it was a r.r. center.